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ABSTRACT

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Running head: BELIEFS ABOUT EDUCATION AND DISCIPLINE ORIENTATION

The Relationship Between Teacher Candidates' Beliefs About Education and Discipline Orientation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the link between preservice teachers' educational beliefs and their discipline orientation. Participants were 134 preservice teachers enrolled at a large university in a southeastern state. A discriminant analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between discipline orientation and educational beliefs ($\Pi^2[4] = 11.17, p < .05$). The effect size (canonical $r = .38$) was moderate. The standardized coefficients and structure coefficients indicated that teacher candidates who were the most interventionist also tended to be the most transmissive. Similarly, teacher candidates with the most non-interventionist orientation tended to be the most progressive. Implications are discussed.

The Relationship Between Teacher Candidates' Beliefs About Education and Discipline Orientation

Two major belief systems have emerged and present themselves in contemporary American public schools: The transmissive and the progressive viewpoints (Doll, 1996). Differences can be detected from even a brief look at topics such as the role of the teacher, the process of learning, and the purpose and methods for discipline. In a transmissive model of education, the teacher is placed at the center of the learning process and is expected to transmit to students an ordered sequence of subject matter as well as a corpus of values. Lecture and demonstration are the primary instructional methods. Because of the necessity for students to learn the process and content of the skills-oriented, subject-matter curriculum, the teacher establishes a classroom that is task oriented, with an emphasis on convergent thinking. It is a classroom in which students are to approach their studies independently. They are expected to engage in hard work, drill and repetition, memorization, and recitation; they are to put aside their personal interests and experiences and immerse themselves in the work of the classroom. Within this setting, the basic view of discipline rests on two premises: (a) children are immature beings who must be inducted into the rules of conduct established for them by the school, and (b) by being controlled by the teacher or other authority figure, students learn to control their own actions (Morris, 1961). As such, school and/or classroom rules are determined by the adults involved, and a ready-made list of penalties likely accompany these rules, with punishments arranged in a hierarchy to fit the severity and occurrence of the misbehavior (Morris, 1961). Because authority that comes from outside the child is the source of good conduct, school personnel serve *in loco parentis* and *in loco society* as they assist students—through habit

formation-- in adopting and coming to value the predesigned and accepted code of proper conduct (Morris, 1961).

The progressive classroom has an ambience of informality, encompasses much activity, and promotes active sharing and learning. In a progressive model of education, the teacher's role is one of a guide whose primary task lies in motivating students. To accomplish this, the teacher creates problem-solving opportunities for students that are often based upon student experience. In addition, the teacher discovers connections between the students and the material they are to learn and assists students in recognizing those connections. Furthermore students learn by direct contact with people, places, and objects in conjunction with reading and hearing about them. Progressive educators view children as basically good and trustworthy; therefore, discipline involves intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, authority (Morris, 1961). As such, rules emerge out of classroom and school experiences, experiences that have meaning for the child. When students join faculty in establishing rules and consequences, students understand the reasons for having and obeying rules, and they become involved in the moral dimensions of education. Furthermore, progressives believe that children learn appropriate behavior not by being told how to behave but by learning how to initiate self-control within real situations. Thus, students are encouraged to develop genuine control of their behaviors through a learning-by-living approach.

The disciplinary tactics that a teacher implements in the instructional environment can be envisioned as a continuum indicating the degree of power a teacher believes he/she has for controlling student behavior (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1980; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). This continuum of power is reflected by tactics from those considered to be teacher-oriented (e.g., teacher immediately implements the tactic to control the behavior) to those considered to be student-oriented (e.g., teacher minimally intervenes to correct the behavior and to optimize the

degree of control the student has to self-correct the behavior). A teacher's decision to use a specific tactic is influenced by the student's inappropriate behavior as well as by the opportunity available to the teacher to implement behavioral reinforcers to encourage appropriate student behavior and to eliminate inappropriate behaviors (Alderman, 2001).

According to Wolfgang and Glickman (1980, 1986) the types of classroom tactics implemented by teachers in a concerted effort to change inappropriate student behavior include using isolation and physical intervention, making directive or indirective statements, modeling and/or reinforcing appropriate behavior, silently looking on, and using questioning techniques. Teachers vary in the use of these tactics; some teachers use the seven tactics and other teachers use a subset consisting of a selected few (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). Furthermore teachers' approaches toward discipline have been categorized as belonging to one of the following orientations: non-interventionist, interventionist, and interactionalist (Wolfgang and Glickman (1986). Teachers' selection and implementation of a specific orientation are influenced by teachers' beliefs about the appropriateness of a disciplinary tactic for a given situation (Martin & Baldwin, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986).

Teachers adhering to the non-interventionist orientation are considered student-oriented and tend to employ tactics considered to use minimal teacher power. The goal is for the teacher to demonstrate empathy toward students and to devise compromises in an effort to provide opportunities for students to self-correct the inappropriate behaviors and learn to manage their own behaviors. Tactics used by non-interventionist teachers may include glances and reflective forms of questioning. Conversely, teachers endorsing an interventionist orientation are considered to be teacher-oriented and tend to take control of the situation by implementing immediately a disciplinary tactic to control the behavior. Disciplinary tactics used by

interventionist teachers to control the environment may include isolation, physically restraining, modeling, and reinforcement. Finally, teachers following the interactionalist orientation tend to use both types of tactics (i.e., non-interventionist and interventionist) in an effort to alleviate conflict by involving the disruptive student in the decision-making process. Tactics used by interactionalist teachers may include directive as well as non-directive statements or questioning.

Discipline and classroom management are high on the list of preservice teachers' concerns about their initial year of teaching (Gee, 2001). For example, Kher, Lacina-Gifford, and Yandell (2000) examined preservice teachers' written responses to two vignettes depicting hypothetical students engaged in inappropriate behavior while in the classroom. Coding of the various classroom management techniques in preservice teachers' written responses revealed that the techniques were more similar than different. Overall, the techniques were verbal directives (i.e., reprimands and lecture) and seeking outside authority (i.e., principal's intervention). Classroom management techniques not found in the preservice teachers' written responses were preventive techniques and tactics designed to enhance students' social and cooperative skills. Similar findings were reported by Volkman and McMahon (1999). These researchers assessed preservice teachers' perceptions about discipline, guidance, and punishment in the context of instructional practice. Questionnaire and interview data indicated that preservice teachers use modeling as a form of guidance; however, preservice teachers did not generate tactics for teaching students various skills in the areas of self-management and socialization.

In studies measuring preservice teachers' disciplinary orientation (i.e., non-interventionist, interventionist, and interactionalist) and their locus of control (Martin & Baldwin, 1992) and limited teaching experience (Laut, 1999), results indicate that preservice teachers show a proclivity toward the non-interventionist orientation. Indeed, studies examining

the effect of years of instructional experience on teachers' discipline orientation indicate that novice teachers who have less than three years experience tended to be more non-interventionist in their orientation toward discipline in contrast to more experienced teachers (Swanson, O'Connor, & Cooney, 1990). More recently, Onwuegbuzie and colleagues (Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, Filer, Collins, & Downing, in press) examined characteristics associated with preservice and inservice practitioners' disciplinary orientation. Results indicated that preservice teachers were more non-interventionist and less interventionist than were inservice teachers. Also, younger respondents were more non-interventionist and less interventionist than were older respondents. Finally, individuals having less teaching experience were more non-interventionist and less interventionist in contrast to individuals having more teaching experience.

Self-efficacy has been identified as an influential variable affecting preservice teachers' approaches toward discipline in two studies conducted by Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) and Henson (in press). Self-efficacy refers to the structure of beliefs governing teachers' selection and implementation of actions to complete activities that impact student performance (Brophy, 1979). Teachers with high levels of efficacy demonstrate a high degree of persistence necessary to address instructionally the academic diversity of their students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Efficacy beliefs also may be a principal variable influencing teachers' acceptance of general classroom placement for students with learning and behavioral problems (Soodak & Podell, 1994).

Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) assessed the degree that preservice teachers' beliefs about controlling students' behaviors in the context of instruction impact how they managed the classroom environment. Findings indicated that the highly efficacious preservice teachers' ideologies were aligned to a humanistic perspective (i.e., empathizing with the disruptive

student), and they were less likely to implement control tactics to limit students' behaviors. Henson (in press) also examined the relationship between preservice teachers' levels of efficacy and their beliefs about controlling students' behaviors in the classroom environment. Results indicated that preservice teachers demonstrating a high level of efficacy were predisposed to be less interventionist regarding their implementation of tactics designed to manage students' behaviors.

Because classroom management and discipline represent the foremost concerns of teachers (Henson, in press; Johns, MacNaughton, & Karabinus, 1989; Veenman, 1984; Woolfolk, 1998) and because beliefs that teacher candidates have about how to minimize discipline problems in their classrooms and their abilities to do so might impact their perceived success and levels of resilience once they enter the teaching field (Henson, in press), knowledge of factors that form teacher candidates' discipline orientation has instructional and developmental implications. It is possible that a relationship prevails between teacher candidates' educational beliefs and their discipline orientation; however, to date, this link has not been investigated. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to examine the association between teacher candidates' educational beliefs and their discipline orientation.

Method

Participants

The original sample comprised 140 teacher candidates enrolled in introductory-level classes for education majors at a university in the southeastern area of the United States. Because six students did not complete the surveys adequately, their data were not analyzed. Therefore, the final sample comprised 134 teacher candidates. Of these, the majority was female (86.2%) and Caucasian-American (83.5%). The distribution pertaining to year of study was as follows:

freshman (9.70%), sophomore (37.31%), junior (32.84%), and senior (20.15%). The overwhelming majority of the students (91.8%) were full-time students. The largest proportion of teacher candidates (43.28%) intended to teach at the kindergarten and elementary school levels. This was followed by the teacher candidates who expressed a desire to teach at the secondary school level (29.10%), those who expressed an intention to teach at the middle school level (18.66%), and those who planned to work as special educators (8.96%).

Instruments and Procedures

During the third week of the semester, participants were administered the Witcher-Travers Survey of Educational Beliefs (WTSEB; Witcher & Travers, 1999) and the Beliefs on Discipline Inventory (BODI; cf. Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). The WTSEB was developed to assess preservice and inservice educators' views on education as related to progressive and transmissive approaches. The instrument first asks respondents to identify demographic information (e.g., location and type of institution in which respondent is enrolled, level of degree respondent is seeking) and then asks for reaction to statements about education. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, respondents make one of five choices indicating their level of agreement with each of 40 statements. Choices range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Half of the statements reflect a transmissive approach to education; half of the statements indicate a progressive approach. The transmissive/progressive framework is used only to organize statements and to reflect the dichotomy faced by educators over the last century as illustrated in the works of such persons as John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky for the progressive view and those of Art Bestor and Robert Hutchins for the transmissive view. Sample items that indicate a progressive view include (a) *The secondary school program should allow students to explore a wide variety of academic and social interests* and (b) *Personalized instruction should be a*

primary educational goal at all grade levels from elementary through senior high school. A transmissive approach is reflected in items such as (a) *The focus at the elementary school level should be on the acquisition of well-defined skills and subject content* and (b) *Student mastery of academic content is imperative if the young are to mature into intellectually well-balanced adults*. The WTSEB can be completed in approximately 15 minutes (Witcher-Travers, 1999) and scored immediately by computer. Possible scores range from 1 to 40, with higher scores indicating a tendency toward progressivism and lower scores indicating a tendency toward transmissivism. Possible scores range from 0 to 40, with higher scores (i.e., greater than 23) indicating interest in progressivism and lower scores (i.e., less than 17) indicating a transmissive orientation. Scores occurring in the range of 17 to 23 indicate an eclectic viewpoint. Witcher and Travers note that the terms *higher* and *lower* do not denote values of superiority or inferiority. As recommended by many researchers (e.g., Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2002a, 2002b, in press-a, in press-b; Thompson & Vacha-Haase, 2000), reliability coefficients always should be reported for the data at hand. Unfortunately, score reliability could not be obtained for the WTSEB for the current inquiry because the sample of teacher candidates were not scored as a group. Instead, the WTSEB responses pertaining to each individual were automatically scored via the instrument authors' website (Witcher-Travers, 1999).

The BODI was developed by Roy T. Tamashiro and Carl D. Glickman (as cited in Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986) to assess candidates' beliefs on classroom discipline by indicating the degree to which they are non-interventionists, interventionists, and interactionalists. The BODI contains 12 multiple-choice items, each containing two response options. For each item, respondents are asked to select the statement with which they most agree. The BODI contains three subscales representing the non-interventionist, interventionist, and interactionalist

tendencies. Each of the 12 items asks respondents to select one orientation from each of the following pairwise comparisons: (a) non-interventionist versus interventionist, (b) non-interventionist versus interactionalist, and (c) interventionist versus interactionalist. These three sets of pairwise comparisons are each represented by four items on the BODI scale. More specifically, respondents have eight opportunities to select a particular discipline orientation (i.e., non-interventionist, interventionist, or interactionalist). Thus, scores on each subscale range from zero to eight, with a high score on any of these scales representing a teacher's inclination toward the particular discipline approach (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). Thus, for example, a score of zero on the interventionist scale indicates that the individual did not endorse this approach for any of the items. On the other hand, a score of eight on the interactionalist measure indicates that the respondent endorsed every item pertaining to this discipline style. As noted by Wolfgang and Glickman (1986), the subscale that yields the highest score represents a leaning toward the discipline it underlies. For the present study, the non-interventionist, interventionist, and interactionalist subscales generated scores that had a classical theory alpha reliability coefficient of .74 (95% confidence interval [CI] = .67, .80), .74 (95% CI = .67, .80), and .82 (95% CI = .77, .86), respectively.

Results

Using cut-off scores for the WTSEB advocated by Witcher and Travers (1999), the teacher candidates distributed themselves as follows: 30.8% were transmissive, 15.4% were progressive, and 53.8% were eclectic. With respect to the BODI, a series of nonparametric dependent *t*-tests (i.e., Wilcoxon signed ranks test) revealed that teacher candidates reported statistically significantly higher levels of interventionism than non-interventionism ($z = 9.46$, $p < .0001$; effect size [ES] = 2.82) and interactionalism ($z = 3.61$, $p < .0001$; ES = 0.58). Also,

teacher candidates reported statistically significantly higher levels of interactionalism than non-interventionism ($z = 9.63$, $p < .0001$; ES = 2.63). The effect sizes for the comparisons involving non-interventionism were extremely large.

Based on distribution of the WTSEB, a canonical discriminant analysis was then undertaken comparing these three groups, using the interventionist, interactionalist, and non-interventionist scores on the BODI as the discriminating variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). The first discriminant function was the only function that was statistically significant, $\Pi^2(4) = 11.17$, $p < .05$, accounting for 81.9% of the total between groups variance (canonical $R = .38$). The group centroids were 0.37 for the transmissive group, 0.07 for the eclectic group, and –0.48 for the progressive group, indicating that this function primarily discriminated transmissive and progressive candidate teachers. An examination of the standardized canonical discriminant function coefficient indicated that, using a cutoff loading of 0.3 (Lambert & Durand, 1975; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996), the interventionist and non-interventionist variables made important contributions to the canonical function, with the contributions being similar. The pooled-within-group correlations (i.e., structure matrix) revealed a consistent pattern of loadings. Again, the interventionist and non-interventionist variables made equally important contributions to the canonical function. These standardized and structure coefficients are presented in Table 1. The positive standardized and structure coefficients for the non-interventionist variable indicates that non-interventionist teacher candidates were more likely to be in the highest educational belief group (i.e., progressive group). Conversely, the negative correlation coefficient for the interventionist variable indicates that interventionist teacher candidates were more likely to be in the lowest educational belief group (i.e., transmissive group). Simply put, teacher candidates who

were the most interventionist also tended to be the most transmissive. Similarly, teacher candidates with the most non-interventionist orientation also tended to be the most progressive.

Insert Table 1 about here

Discussion

The teacher candidates in the current investigation revealed an interesting distribution of scores with respect to the measure of educational beliefs. Approximately one-third of these preservice teachers were classified as transmissive. This proportion is similar to Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, and James (in press), who found that 28.4% of teacher candidates in their sample exhibited a transmissive orientation. In both the current investigation and that of Minor et al. (in press), teacher candidates with progressive orientations represented the smallest proportion (15.4% vs. 12.7%), whereas those with eclectic educational beliefs represented by far the largest proportion (53.8% vs. 59.0%). Although more than one-half of the teacher candidates were eclectic in orientation, as noted by Minor et al. (in press), this does not mean that these sample members are neutral or moderate with respect to their educational beliefs. Such labels are only justified if the teacher candidate who is classified as eclectic has seriously considered and weighed both transmissive and progressive educational viewpoints with respect to the goals of education and the best way to achieve these goals. Alternatively stated, the preservice teacher must be very cognizant of the tenets of both transmissive and progressive positions before an eclectic educational position can be viewed as authentic; otherwise, this view indicates that a person training to be a teacher has not yet developed a definitive educational philosophy (Witcher & Travers, 1999). Failure to adopt an educational philosophy would likely stem from a

lack of exposure to the various educational approaches and techniques. Interestingly, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, James, and Minor (2002) found that after completing their first semester of a teacher preparation program, teacher candidates tend to move toward a progressive orientation.

With respect to discipline beliefs, the teacher candidates were predominantly interventionist, followed by interactionalists. The sample members endorsed non-interventionism to, by far, the smallest extent. This finding is not surprising, bearing in mind that non-interventionism represents the least amount of control that teachers exercise over their students (Tomal, 1999, 2001). It is likely that preservice teachers in the beginning of their training do not have the confidence to transfer power to their students. Conversely, interventionism represents the most control for the teacher (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). Future research should investigate whether teacher candidates become less interventionist as they advance through their teacher education program in general and as they become more exposed to non-interventionist discipline strategies in particular.

The main finding in the present study were that teacher candidates who were the most interventionist also tended to be the most transmissive, and those with the most non-interventionist orientation also tended to be the most progressive. This relationship between teacher candidates' discipline beliefs and educational beliefs suggests either that discipline beliefs play a role in shaping educational beliefs, that teacher candidates' educational beliefs influence discipline beliefs to some degree, or that the relationship is bi-directional and reciprocal. Thus, future research should seek to determine the temporal sequence of this relationship.

Regardless of the causal nature of the relationship between educational beliefs and

discipline beliefs, this link has logical appeal. Teachers with transmissive orientations are often regarded as being *conservative* or *traditional* (Witcher & Travers, 1999). This group of educators tends to believe that their primary function is to transmit important knowledge to their students, preferring teaching methods such as lecture, demonstration, and recitation. Transmissive teachers endorse curricula that are subject-centered, organized and systematic, and centering on the mastery of specific skills, content, and procedures. As such, their classrooms tend to have a business-like environment where students are passive learners who generally work independently (Witcher & Travers, 1999). In order to ensure immediate control of their classrooms, transmissive teachers likely use techniques such as reinforcement, modeling, physically restraining, or isolating—methods that are consistent with interventionists (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). Further, both transmissive teachers and interventionists stress teacher authority and practice behavior modification strategies to shape student behavior (Witcher & Travers, 1999; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986).

On the other end of the spectrum, progressive teachers, who are often referred to as being *modern* or *experiential*, tend to view schools as social institutions and strive to align school programming with contemporary goals and needs in an attempt to make their students' education as meaningful and as relevant to them as possible. Consequently, progressive teachers tend to view themselves as facilitators, guides, or motivators (Witcher & Travers, 1999). This is consistent to non-interventionists who prefer to take on a supportive and empathetic role, using minimal power (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). Additionally, progressive teachers tend to use more student-centered teaching strategies, engaging their students in active learning, both independently and cooperatively, and focusing on solving learner-generated problems (Witcher & Travers, 1999). In accordance with these instructional approaches, non-interventionists believe

that students are capable of managing their own behavior (Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986).

Previous research has documented that teachers' discipline orientation is related to several demographic variables, including age and locus of control (Martin & Baldwin, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996; Onwuegbuzie et al., in press). Thus, the present investigation has contributed to the literature by showing that individuals enter teacher-training programs with discipline orientations that have an educational context, namely, that discipline orientation varies as a function of coeducational beliefs. A next step in the research process is to determine how discipline orientation and educational beliefs interplay during the course of teacher candidates' programs as they prepare themselves for the world of teaching.

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Table 1

Standardized Coefficients and Structure Coefficients for First Discriminant Function

Variable	Standardized Coefficient	Structure Coefficient	Structure Coefficient[2]
Discipline Orientation:			
Interventionist	-0.58*	-0.88*	0.77
Non-Interventionist	0.56*	0.87*	0.76
Interactionalist	0.01	0.24	0.06

* loadings with effect sizes larger than .3 (Lambert & Durand, 1975)

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